

# Managing private native forests after flooding and prolonged rainfall

This fact sheet provides guidance for landholders with Private Native Forestry (PNF) Plans and contractors on undertaking activities within PNF Plans after flooding and prolonged rainfall.

## How can flooding and prolonged wet weather affect my forest?

Native forests on floodplains are adapted to flooding as a natural part of the Australian landscape. However, care should be taken to assess and manage your forest in accordance with the Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice (PNF Codes) after flooding or prolonged rainfall.

There are three key aspects of your private native forest to consider during and after flooding and prolonged wet weather:

- Weed control
- Soil erosion
- Forest infrastructure

## How should I care for my forest after a flood or prolonged rainfall?

Following a flood or prolonged rainfall, do not commence repair works or operations using machinery until soils are no longer saturated. Saturated soils are prone to erosion and will not compact sufficiently.

It may be possible to implement erosion control works without machinery assistance. For example, hay bales, silt fencing and/or coir logs may be installed to capture sediment.

Forwarders, excavators and truck-mounted loaders may be used as stationary loaders when there is runoff from the log landing. All other machinery on the log landing must remain stationary when there is runoff from the log landing surface, unless the log landing is constructed of gravel or other stable material.

**Under the PNF Codes of Practice, snigging, use of log landings and portable mill operations must not occur when:**

- there is runoff from the snig track surface, or;
- the soils are saturated, or;
- soil is rutted to a depth of more than 200mm below the track surface over a 20-metre section or longer.

## Assess condition of forest infrastructure

Once it is appropriate and safe to do so, assess any damage that may have been sustained to roads, access tracks, drainage features and drainage feature crossings during the wet weather. When undertaking repairs, refer to the PNF Codes to ensure forest infrastructure is constructed to meet the required standards.

Drainage lines and crossings may have become blocked with debris during higher flows. It is important to remove significant blockages to maintain the integrity of crossings and allow fish passage through drainage lines.

After a flood, debris may have washed into fencing and against tree trunks requiring repair or removal of fence lines. If native vegetation needs to be removed to undertake fencing repairs in your PNF area, talk to Local Land Services about allowable activities within PNF Plan areas.

If you have undertaken recent harvest operations, assess snig track drainage and erosion control structures for damage. Consider action that may be required to repair or remediate drainage and erosion control structures.

## Prioritise weed control

Weeds can be dispersed during flood events and carried downstream to areas where they were not previously established. As soon as it is safe and allowable to do so under the PNF Codes, assess your forest for weed outbreaks. Early weed treatment will prevent bigger outbreaks and will be more cost effective long-term.

## Which parts of the PNF Code should I treat with extra care after a flood?

### Section 4: Protection of the environment

Areas of existing mass movement and dispersible and highly erodible soils are likely to be more prone to erosion during and after heavy rainfall. Erosion controls are especially important in areas with these landscape features following a flood or significant rainfall event.

Drainage feature protections apply to all PNF Plan areas. However, riparian exclusion and buffer zones are particularly important during and after a flood to reduce soil erosion.

Reassess drainage features and unmapped drainage lines within your PNF Plan area which may have changed during flooding or prolonged rainfall and apply drainage feature protections in the PNF Codes as required.

### Section 5: Construction and maintenance of forest infrastructure

Following a flood or prolonged rainfall, damage may be sustained to roads and drainage feature crossings. Existing roads may be maintained to minimise the construction of new roads and drainage feature crossings as far as practicable within PNF Plan areas.

Runoff flows may have removed or flattened vegetation around drainage discharge areas, creating a higher risk of erosion. If stable discharge areas are difficult to find, other sediment control structures such as sediment fencing, hay bales or rock armor can be used to stabilise the area and reduce erosion and sediment movement into waterways.

Caution should be taken when re-commencing operations as although track surfaces may look dry, the subsoil may still be saturated making heavy vehicle movements unsafe and potentially leading to high repair costs if the road surface fails.

Landholders are required to document all works in their Forest Operation Plan under the PNF Codes.

## Can I remove a tree or other living native vegetation that may be presenting a safety risk?

The Allowable Activities in PNF Plans allow for removal of trees to reduce an imminent risk of serious personal injury or damage to property. Such clearing should be only be undertaken to the minimum extent necessary. If you are unsure how to apply the Allowable Activities and PNF Codes to your situation, please contact Local Land Services for assistance.

## What can I do to prepare my forest for future flood and prolonged rainfall events?

Investing in forest management ahead of floods and prolonged rainfall can reduce the impact they may have on your forest and forest infrastructure.

Road upgrades can reduce roads susceptibility to wash away and erosion. Hard stand areas on log dumps, such as gravel beds can allow trucks to park and turn around with less risk of soil displacement.

### We're here to help

**Find us online:** [lls.nsw.gov.au](https://lls.nsw.gov.au)

**Call us:** 1300 795 299 and ask for an officer to advise you on Private Native Forestry

**Email us:** [pnf.info@nsw.gov.au](mailto:pnf.info@nsw.gov.au)

**See us:** drop into your nearest Local Land Services office